

NEWS & VIEWS



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UP BEAT SOS

from Douglas Coombes
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**Birmingham Male Voice Choir
Harold Jones receives a Gold Welsh Dragon brooch
for his years of service and to celebrate
on 22 July his 100th birthday.**



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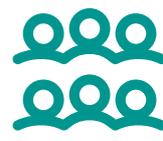
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Last date for copy - 31 December 2023

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Crawford's Corner

Publications Officer - Bob Swallow



The autumn is now fast approaching and the somewhat strange summer weather we hope will settle into a more normal season. How often in the last few years have we used the word 'normal', hoping for a return to 'normality'.

In this issue of News & Views we find that a number of choirs have returned to the way they were working before our world was turned upside down by a pandemic. They find that some of the people they

worked with are no longer there but some are still going strong after many years of service and song.

A number of choirs have celebrated many years of song like the NAV did in 2020 and managed to celebrate last year. We hope to look forward to a future of change and development. Tamar Valley Male Voice choir are still loving every minute and The Fairburn Singers have been travelling far afield.

It isn't often I get an opportunity to put a picture on the front of News & Views which shows a man who celebrated a century of life, and one who looks as if he's

ready to go on singing. We done Harold.

Make sure you take a good look at what is happening next year as far as NAC Conference is concerned. First of all it is not a weekend conference and second, it will not be held in England or Scotland nor Wales nor Ireland. Not on any land. NAC Conference 2024 will be held in the English Channel and Irish Sea as the cruise ship Bollette sails from Southampton to Liverpool.

We are grateful to Fred.Olsen Cruises for giving us the opportunity to do something different.

Chairman's Chat

NAC Chairman - Brenda Wilkinson



Hello!

Well, it seems to be positivity all the way now with choirs settling back into their activities. Although quite a number of choirs have disbanded recently, there have been a few whose numbers have dwindled and they have joined with another choir rather than disband and I wish them a good and happy

new future together. It is lovely to see choirs doing what they do best.

There is a massive interest in the 2024 conference. I don't know whether this is because we are cruising along the coasts of England and Wales or another positive 'let's go and do everything we can while we can', moment but whichever it is I am sure you will enjoy yourselves. The format will be different in some ways but it's good to shake things up occasionally. I can guarantee the accommodation and food will be excellent on board, you just

have to do is enjoy it all.

As a chorister myself I can't go away without mentioning it. Decorations and mince pies are already on sale in some shops and, like many choirs up and down the country, we have begun rehearsing Christmas music, but nobody has mentioned it yet.

I know it's a bit early, but we don't have another publication this year so I hope you all have a wonderful musical Christmas-time and wish you all a happy 2024.

SOS from Douglas Coombes

A number of NAC members are also members of **UP BEAT**, a free bi-monthly e-newsletter for Conductors that I started in 2009. There are over 800 members but at the beginning of July this year, my computer crashed quite spectacularly when I was updating Microsoft Outlook. The disastrous result was that I lost all my contact details, including all the members of UP BEAT. I have been able to assemble a list of some members, but so many are still missing. I have used social media with some success and through News and Views I am hoping to make contact with UP BEAT members, so that I can restore them to the list and send out the e-newsletters that they have not received.

Incidentally, membership is free, and is open to newcomers as well, and if you wish to join just let me know. If you would like more details, get in touch by email: dcoombes@clara.net

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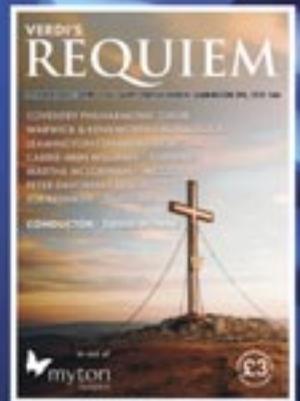
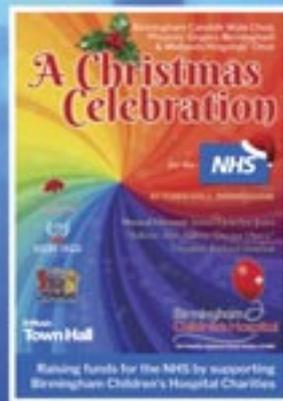
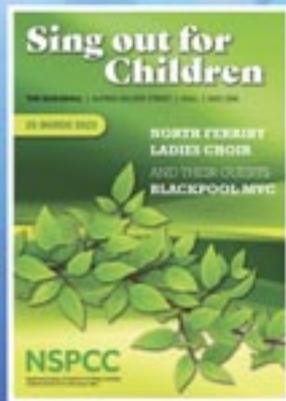
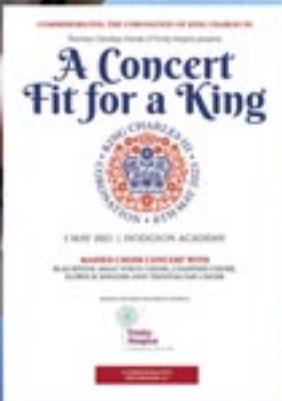
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West Country Visit - May 2023

The Amici Singers & The Ensemble of Friends Thames North - Elizabeth Gammell



The Coronavirus pandemic prevented the Amici Singers from making a much-anticipated trip to the West Country in 2020. Three years later, to everyone's delight, the trip finally happened. With a pleasant hotel on the seafront at Weston-super-Mare as a base for the four-night stay, an interesting itinerary organised by Jo of Sound Escapes, enabled members to enjoy fun social time as well as some wonderful musical experiences.

There were 49 in the party. A number of singers were accompanied by family members, the age range was from 6 months (some might say madness to take a small baby on such a trip, but with parents in both choirs, the little one was immediately surrounded by surrogate grannies and aunties who ensured she had a very enjoyable experience), through teenagers, to those well into their eighties - which made for a lovely intergenerational feel. By the end of the tour everyone felt they had really got to know people much better and reminded us how important such opportunities are for the strength of the choirs. The pandemic almost prevented us from singing and took away so much of the essence of the choir, which we had unwisely taken for granted; this trip has done a great deal to restore The Amici Singers to what it was three years ago.

After a gruelling travelling day, (we might have expected the traffic on a Friday leading to a Bank Holiday and half-term to be heavy), it was great to spend the first night relaxing, becoming familiar with the hotel and exploring the restaurants of Weston.

Saturday morning began with a critical tour rehearsal because as well as the Amici Singers, other singers from an SATB choir also conducted by Douglas Coombes called The Ensemble of Friends were in the party. The two choirs have often performed concerts together, and Douglas had arranged some joint items. Voices quickly adjusted, the blend was lovely, boding well for the two concerts and two church services ahead.



After that some of the party took rides along the beach in a donkey cart, others braved the heights of the Big Wheel, to get a great view over the town...or just went walking, sampling ice creams and, of course, traditional fish and chips.

The first concert took place in All Saints and St Saviours, an impressive church in Weston with extremely good acoustics; it

is always exciting to sing in a space which embraces the sound we make, encourages everyone to listen and really give of their best. We must have managed that, the audience stood to applaud enthusiastically at the end and asked for an encore.

For our second concert we travelled towards Bristol to sing at St Mary's, Portbury - an ancient church with Victorian pews, which made fitting the singers on the chancel steps a tad problematic. Another very friendly audience, who, although they'd never heard us before, clearly appreciated our music. There was an interval with lavish refreshments. It was quite funny watching choir members wrestling with the temptations of luscious cakes and sandwiches, knowing that eating them would make singing the second half of the concert seriously uncomfortable! In the evening the party took over a restaurant delightfully called The Ginger Pig Kitchen for a convivial meal - another chance to chat with other people in the group as we ate a delicious dinner.

Day Three entailed a 09.00 start because we were heading for Bristol to sing Evening Song in the Cathedral. Our party contained two very fine organists and they helped each other become familiar with organs neither had played before. Several of the party had a few mobility issues but that didn't hamper them from fully participating in the tours of the cathedral, others were always there to lend an arm or push a wheelchair - that's Amiciness. After lunch we returned to the cathedral to be instructed in the art of processing. Church choirs make this look easy, but singers who have never tried it before quickly come to realise the challenges - not least ending up in the right place, and maintaining the same pace and even spacing between pairs. The service we were singing is the oldest in the Church of England and has roots in the monastic tradition pre-Reformation. Douglas composed an original setting of the Responses, Magnificat, and Nunc Dimittis, which, with a psalm, hymn, and anthem, form the musical elements of this dignified and reflective service. Singing in traditional choir stalls, facing inwards, was a new experience for some, and the choir

soon adjusted to voices coming from unfamiliar places. Our anthem, by Douglas, *Gloria* based on Pachelbel's Canon, to the words 'Gloria in excelsis Deo' took on a new meaning in this setting and we were all moved by the way our voices bloomed into the lofty spaces of the cathedral. It was thrilling.

Last day of the tour arrived all too quickly. We had to check out and set off for the beautiful cathedral at Wells, to sing another Evensong. Again, we were given a fascinating tour of the amazing building and went off to rehearse with our heads

full of architectural miracles and phenomenal craftsmanship. After our experience in Bristol, processing in Wells was easier although every church is unique, and we had to stay very alert. We practised again because this service contained not one but two psalms, 147 and 148, which took over seven minutes to sing – we'd worked extremely hard on the unfamiliar 'pointing' and it needed considerable concentration. This was a Festal Evensong, and we had four clergy in full regalia led by a verger swinging a thurible from which fragrant incense swirled. After four days of

wonderfully varied activities we were tired, but somehow managed to maintain focus to carry us through the service and heave a big sigh of relief as we completed the Recessional.

The Amici Singers have been, in their 48-year history, privileged to sing in many wonderful places and share a joyful social life which cements the musical backbone of the choir. This tour of the West Country has been just another chapter to add to the fun and happiness which belonging to a choir can bring.

Czechia – June 2023

The Fairburn Singers – Yorkshire North and East – Sally Whittingham

Day One - Tuesday 20 June 2023 – 05.30

46 excited choir members, and family and friends, gathered to board the coach at Fairburn to Luton airport on a lovely summer's morning. Our long-awaited trip to Czechia was about to start. Our MD, Andris, had been instrumental in planning a very busy schedule for the choir around Prague and Karlovy Vary, including a couple of flash mob opportunities and a concert in a beautiful church in Sedlec.

It's fair to say that the weather deteriorated the closer we got to Luton, in fact, a scheduled stop at Watford Gap could not have been more badly timed! When we tried to leave the services to get back on the coach, the rain was so heavy that we were all soaked in the few seconds it took to run from the building to the coach – not the best start! And that setback was exacerbated on arrival at the airport to find our Wizzair flight was delayed by two hours.

However, the flight eventually left Luton and made very good time arriving at Václav Havel airport, Prague, one and half hours later. But due to the delay, our coach transfer to Prague city had disappeared. Several frantic phone calls, and a pint of beer or two later, he reappeared, and we were on our way to our hotel. By now the carefully planned itinerary was already two and a half hours late, so on arrival at the hotel, we just about had time for a quick change before we were hustled out to the designated restaurant for our pre-ordered meal. Finally able to



relax in a very convivial atmosphere, we enjoyed our first Czechian meal and several more glasses of beer and wine. Exhausted after our early start and all the delays, we were very happy to return to our hotel, put on the air con (it was around 26°C) and retire to bed.

Day Two - Wednesday 21 June 2023

After a lovely breakfast taken in the hotel courtyard, and a chorus of happy birthday for me, we met in the foyer to be introduced to our guides Alice and Teresa who would be walking us around the sites of Prague city centre. We arrived via the very efficient tram system and set off.

Prague is bisected by the Vltava River. Nicknamed 'the City of a Hundred Spires,' it's known for its Old Town Square, the heart of its historic core, with colourful baroque buildings and Gothic churches. We were soon taking in the sights of the Lennon Memorial Wall. Located in a small and secluded square across from the French Embassy, the wall has been decorated by love poems and short messages against the regime since the 1960s. It received its first decoration connected to

John Lennon—a symbol of freedom, western culture and political struggle—following the 1980 assassination of John Lennon when an unknown artist painted a single image of the singer-songwriter and added some lyrics. The wall continuously undergoes change, and the original portrait of Lennon is long lost under layers of new paint. Even when the wall was repainted by the authorities, by the next day it was again full of poems and flowers. Today, the wall represents a symbol of global ideals such as love and peace.

We continued past other places of interest until we ascended the steps onto historic Charles Bridge. Completed in 1402, pedestrian Charles Bridge is lined with statues of Catholic saints. It was also the site of our first flash mob rendition of a choir favourite, *One Voice*. We executed this perfectly to the surprise of several visitors on the bridge and in the surrounding buildings. We then continued our tour through the Old Town until we reached



the medieval Astronomical Clock which is attached to the Old Town Hall and which gives an animated hourly show.

The clock was first installed in 1410, making it the third-oldest astronomical clock in the world and the oldest clock still in operation. The clock mechanism has three main components – the astronomical dial, representing the position of the Sun and Moon in the sky and displaying various astronomical details; statues of various Catholic saints stand on either side of the clock. Legend has it that the clockmaker, Hanuš, was blinded on the order of the Prague Councillors so that he could not repeat his work; in turn, he disabled the clock, and no one was able to repair it for the next hundred years. We joined the throngs of people waiting for the 12 o'clock chimes, and with phones ready to record, we watched the short spectacle.

A free afternoon followed and a very pleasurable dinner cruise along the River Vltava for some of us in the evening, rounded off day two of our tour.

Day Three - Thursday 22 June 2023

Our guides were once more in evidence as this time we travelled up to the magnificent Prague Castle in 30°C heat. With its origin dating back to the early days of 870, the royal palace of Prague Castle has been an integral part of Prague's history and has stood the test of time with the help of renovation, expansion, and repair works. An ancient symbol of the Czech State, the most significant Czech monument and one of the most important cultural institutions in Czechia, Prague Castle is considered the largest coherent castle complex in the world and is lauded as a monument of cultural and historical importance. The castle includes various historic buildings, palaces, gardens, courtyards, and churches. Included in the centre of Prague Castle is the magnificent St Vitus Cathedral, where once again we sang to the crowds, this time it was an unaccompanied version of *If Ye Love Me* (Thomas Tallis). Unfortunately, we were competing with the cathedral organist, but we were well received by those who could hear us.

We then made our way back down the hill to the Waldstein Gardens, a 17th century garden at the Senate palace, with ornamental pools and baroque statues, and the site of yet another ad hoc flash mob

rendition, this time we also sang another choir favourite *As Long as I have Music*. The rest of the afternoon was free time for lunch, and a final tour of Prague, before we were whisked off to our second destination, Karlovy Vary, a town approximately one and a half hours northwest of Prague.

Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad) is a spa town in the west Bohemia region of the Czechia. Its numerous thermal springs have made it a popular resort since the 19th century. The riverside spa district is home to several colonnades with columned walkways. The modern Hot Spring Colonnade houses the Pramen Vřídlo geyser, which spouts up to twelve metres high.



Here we were housed in two separate hotels which were very much in the style of the architecture of the town (and minus any air con) and where dinner was arranged at the restaurant of Hotel Ruze. We were still plagued by 27°C temperatures in the evening and with the threat of a storm to come overnight, we were advised to keep windows and doors closed. Sleeping was not an easy task for any of us that night!

Day Four - Friday 23 June 2023

However, as Day Four dawned, and after a very mediocre storm, the temperature had dropped to 16° and it was raining! We had the day free to explore the town and its environs. I joined a group who went up the funicular railway to the Diana Tower which is a massive four-sided brick building with bevelled corners, built on a prismatic stone plinth and supplemented by a covered wooden walkway of the observation platform, reaching a total height of 40m. The observation walkway at a height of 35m is accessible by 150 wooden stairs spiralling counterclockwise or for those less willing

to climb them, there was a lift. From the tower there is a view of practically the entire city of Karlovy Vary, the valley of the rivers Ohře and Teplá and a large part of the spa forests. To the north, the Ore Mountains with Klínovec, to the east the Doupovské Mountains and to the southwest, the Slavkovský Forest. On a clear day, you can also see the peaks of the Fichtelgebirge (Smrčiny) mountains in the west-southwest, and up to a distance of 70 km.

Also at the top of the funicular was the amazing 100 year old wooden structure which is now a restaurant, along with a small farm and an incredible Butterfly House, where you joined the butterflies flying freely around you, and in some cases landing on you.

Back down in the town, it was refreshing to be able to stroll through the pedestrianised areas, so different from the heat and crowds of Prague, and we were able to enjoy a leisurely lunch before meeting up in full choir uniform later in the day on the steps of the pavilion for a quick photocall and yet another rendition of *One Voice* for the inhabitants and visitors of Karlovy Vary, who had gathered to see what we were all doing.

At around 17.15, we travelled the short distance to the little village of Sedlec, home to St Anne's Church and the venue for our planned and widely advertised concert. The church has the most amazing acoustics, and after a quick rehearsal, our concert began at 19.00, to a packed church of local people, who enjoyed listening to a medley of songs from *Les Miserables*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Oklahoma*, *A Tribute to Queen* as well as choir favourites *It Don't Mean a Thing* and *Let the River Run*. One of the highlights for us was that our compère (and Chair), Janet, was accompanied by a translator, who had excellent English and managed to convey to the audience many of the nuances that Janet is well known for, including encouraging audience participation for the start of *We will Rock You* (stamp, stamp, clap).

After the concert, we were once more conveyed back to Karlovy Vary and to the Goethe Beer House where our third pre-ordered and arranged meal took place.

Everyone was in high spirits on the back of a very well received and executed concert. We took advantage of our last night and enjoyed our time together reminiscing about the success of the whole trip.

Day Five – Saturday 24 June 2023

We left Karlovy Vary at 11.15, heading back to the airport, where once again we were greeted with the news that our flight was delayed by two and a half hours. In all, we spent six hours at Prague airport waiting for our flight. The delay at Prague

meant an ongoing delay back at Luton, but our coach was waiting for us and we began our journey back home up the M1, stopping briefly at the services to allow a change of drivers, and a McDonalds (the only hot meal offering that was open).

We eventually arrived back in Fairburn at 00.15.

We had been on a fantastic trip, enjoyed by everyone involved. We survived the high temperatures and managed to negotiate the trams very successfully in Prague and

then enjoyed the relative peace of Karlovy Vary. Our flash mob renditions were well received everywhere we went, and our concert was an absolute triumph.

As a choir, our thanks go to Andris, who is not only our MD, but an accomplished event organiser/travel agent and whose skills in this regard are second to none. We are now looking forward to our next choir trip which is a cruise on Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines in May 2024 to the Isles of Scilly and Guernsey and a stop at Honfleur on the French Normandy coast.

Still Loving Every Minute

Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir – Cornwall - Rosemary Cole



Rosemary Cole
Director of Music
TVMVC

Eric Cruse

Jean Cruse

Charles Westlake
Chairman
TVMVC

There's always a sense of anticipation and excitement as the annual Gala Concert approaches, bringing with it the opportunity to showcase the music that has been added to the repertoire during the year. June 23, 2023 was no exception. Tamar Valley Male Voice Choir's programme for the evening comprised old favourites as well as new songs. The Guest Artists were Mary and Leslie Mazur-Park, professional musicians, whose stunning performances on piano and oboe respectively captivated

choir and audience alike.

It was after the interval that a surprise opportunity came for everyone to sing *Happy Birthday* to founder member Eric Cruse, the choir's oldest member, who was 91 that day and still singing. That was not all though. He and his wife Jean were called to the front of the church to receive gifts and flowers because in two days' time they were to celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary.

Eric and Jean have been stalwart supporters of the choir since it was formed on St George's Day, 2006. The choir is immensely grateful to them both for all they have done.

Receiving a 20-year Long Service certificate from the Chairman of the Cornish Federation of Male Voice Choirs in 2022, Eric remarked: 'The camaraderie, the practices – I'd be lost without it'. And he's still loving every minute of it!

Experiencing Golden Opportunities

The Birmingham Male Voice Choir – Midlands-West – Warren Woodcock



The Birmingham Icknield Choir

Towards the end of the 19th Century Quakers such as Cadbury, founded the Early Morning Adult Schools, offering the opportunity for adults to acquire that education that they had missed when they were younger. Following the success of this venture, other activities were added including music. Early in 1900 members formed a male choir, calling themselves 'Icknield Street Early Morning Adult School Male Voice Choir', and

the choir performed many concerts in the Birmingham, Hockley area.

1910 saw the setting up of the Adult School Union Music Festival, Cadbury's providing a large shield for the male voice competition. The choir won the first of its many trophies.

The outbreak of WW1 meant a suspension of the choir activities, which recommenced again in 1919 and by 1921 it was performing many concerts a year and continuing to win many trophies until the outbreak of WW2. Once again, at the end of hostilities the choir re-assembled and was happy to be singing again.

Due to changes in the evening institute and adult evening classes the choir had many homes over the next few years and in the 1950s changed its name to The Icknield Male Voice Choir. By 2001 the choir had rehearsal space at St Chad's Cathedral in the city centre and continued



to enjoy success culminating in 2000 with a 100 year celebration in Birmingham Symphony Hall. There have been many changes over the years but the love of good music remains.

In 2002 to reflect a broader base in the area, the choir changed its name to The Birmingham Icknield Male Voice Choir. The choir still retains these strong traditions under the baton of Steve Roche ably accompanied by Chris Walk.

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In 2020, due to the Covid pandemic, the choir moved to The Welsh Chapel in Livery Street, which we share with the other great choir The Birmingham Canoldir Male Choir.

The Birmingham Canoldir Male Choir

In the beginning, it was a rugby match which brought together the Welsh exiles. More importantly, it was after a rugby match held on St David's Day in 1966 and a few pints later that the singing began and somewhere between *Cwm Rhondda* and *Sospan Fach* those present realised that singing was fun and the seeds were sown to form a Male Voice Choir, and so Canoldir was born.

An initial group assembled, a rehearsal room was hired, a teacher of music was persuaded to take up the baton and the wife of a group member was coerced into becoming the accompanist. To swell the membership it was agreed to seek men from all corners of the land and it was this blend of accents and personalities which made the choir unique.

The name of the choir 'Canoldir' roughly translated from the Welsh stands for Middle Land and many people have looked in vain on maps to find this mythical town.

The choir having been formed, rehearsals commenced, and the hard work began to blend the voices and reflect the Welsh influence.

With successful performances established it was decided that competition was the next goal and with small beginnings and successful results the choir started to grow in confidence and attract new members. At its peak Canoldir had over 120 members, and continued to enjoy, under the baton of its founder Clive Griffiths MBE and later James Llewelyn Jones, many years of successful singing in both competition and performances.

Unfortunately, as a result of modern technology, young people are less interested in making their own entertainment and so choir membership has declined and Canoldir along with other choirs is finding it difficult to attract new members.

Sharing our rehearsal premises with The Birmingham Icknield Choir and looking for a new musical director it made sense to explore merging these two choirs. Having worked closely together over the past 18 months, we are well down the line to bring the two choirs together performing under

the name The Birmingham Male Voice Choir and we have been encouraged by audience reaction to our concerts.

Harold Jones

Both choirs are very proud to have Harold in our midst. He has been a member of Canoldir for 34 years and at a concert near to where Harold lives we were able to make a special presentation of a Gold Welsh Dragon brooch to thank him not only for his years of service but to celebrate on 22 July his 100th birthday. How many choirs have a member who continues to attend both rehearsals each week and concert performances at 100, if it doesn't prove that singing extends your health, nothing will.

Harold despite his age has recently been 40 times around his property each day to raise funds for Motor Neurone Disease and has raised nearly £30,000.

So with Harold in good health and the joint choir in good voice we are looking forward to an exciting future.

The advertisement for LYN OAKES CHOIR UNIFORMS features a dark blue background. At the top center is a crest with a lion and a unicorn. Below the crest, the text 'LYN OAKES' is written in a large, white, serif font, with 'CHOIR UNIFORMS' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font underneath. Four circular callouts are arranged around the central text, each containing a service highlight: 'Measuring & Fitting Service Across the UK', 'Unique Designs for Gentlemen & Ladies', 'Proud to use British Cloths, Linings & Quality Trims', and 'Personalisation Options with your Logo, Crest, Choir Colours'. Below the text is a row of four mannequins wearing suits in different colors: teal, purple, blue, and red. Each mannequin is also wearing a patterned tie. At the bottom of the advertisement, there is a paragraph of text: 'We are established suppliers of quality clothing for choirs and bands. We have a vast selection of styles, clothes, linings and trims to choose from; perfect for creating a unique look to define your choir. With a tailoring service working across the whole of the UK, we can measure and fit your uniform so it is perfect for performances and competitions. Add a personalised touch with your branding embroidered, or incorporate an accent colour. Feel free to find out more by contacting us.' At the very bottom, there are three pieces of contact information: 'sales@lynoakes.co.uk', '0 1 2 9 9 8 2 7 3 6 0', and 'www.lynoakes.co.uk'.

Celebrating Diversity...

Sheffield One World Choir – Yorkshire South – Diana Tottle



Introducing Sheffield One World Choir

‘Singing is love – if you don’t have love you can’t sing. We feel loved.’

This was one of many moving statements of appreciation made this week by our Sheffield One World Choir members during a session to reflect on the last year and plan for next.

Sheffield One World Choir has a membership made up of two thirds refugees and asylum seekers and one third local residents who can commit to behind scenes support as well as the weekly rehearsal. We were set up in 2018 by Natural Voice Network musical director, Emer McKay, and to begin with we sang in the open plan foyer of the local City of Sanctuary Drop-in space. When we became too big and loud we moved into their large basement and when we started spilling up the stairs from there they politely suggested we find a new venue! We had obviously literally ‘struck a chord’ with our members and our numbers have continued to grow.

That was back in 2020 – just before the covid lock-down. And of course that then became a massive challenge. For all choirs it was a difficult time but our choir members had additional challenges. Simply keeping in touch with the ever-changing restrictions on movement and testing advice was well-nigh impossible if you have limited English and a phone with no data. People who were already dealing with the stress of not knowing if their asylum claim would be accepted were also needing to access covid masks and tests, reasonably priced food, toiletries and clothing. Children being home-schooled needed laptops. Everyone

needed a phone with charge, signal and data. So our choir ended up meeting a lot more needs than singing! But as well as all the support the singing carried on regardless – on Zoom. Two years on we still keep the Zoom broadcasts going, since some members have been subsequently dispersed to other parts of the UK but still want to keep connected with the choir community - their UK family.



‘I feel alive and home.’ ‘Singing reminds us we are at home when we sing together’

When we were allowed to meet together in person again we found a new venue in a Somali community centre not far from The Sanctuary and on good bus routes for people travelling from far and wide across Sheffield. Our membership has expanded to a regular 30 or more weekly attendance with 80 on the Whatsapp group that keeps our wider community connected. Our asylum seeker and refugee members are fleeing conflict or persecution from a wide range of countries: several African countries, Syria, Iran, Ukraine.... The list goes on and everyone delights in the diversity of cultures. For many, singing is deeply embedded in their

own culture and to sing with others is a fantastic therapeutic outlet. We deliberately choose songs from our members’ countries – usually in their own language and our Director also works with individuals to create their own songs and adapts them to 4 part harmony. Just look at our website to see us in action:

www.sheffieldoneworldchoir.com.

and – as you will see from that website – our members love nothing better than performing. Our audiences seem to like us too since we are continually being invited to support events across the city and beyond. In this last year we performed in Sheffield Cathedral to raise funds for 2 refugee charities; we joined an LGBT+ choir to sing in The Winter Gardens; we did a mass choir and community rendition of *You’ll never walk alone* in a local park, raising funds for projects in Palestine and launched the 10 day ‘Migration Matters’ arts festival. We’re booked to contribute to the Yorkshire Integration festival when it comes to Sheffield in September and we have been invited by award winning barbershop chorus, Hallmark of Harmony, to participate alongside 3 other choirs in the 45th anniversary celebration concert at The Octagon Centre, Sheffield University in November.

Our mission is very much about sharing the universal joy of singing and celebrating diversity. We’re delighted to be going from strength to strength and only hope we can continue to raise the relatively little funds it takes to keep us going. It takes about £600/month to meet the cost of bus fares for our refugee and asylum seeking members, the room hire and a token fee to our MD. As well as raising funds for others we’re realising we need to raise funds for ourselves! In our plans for next year one member suggested a massive SOWC concert inviting the whole of Sheffield, and another thinks we should go to Scotland or Wales or Ireland and mix with choirs there.

Who knows?! If you’d like to see us in action or even contribute to our cost please take a look at our website:

www.sheffieldoneworldchoir.com

Musical Memories

Swindon Male Voice Choir - South West - Simon Grove

Max Brockman-More (1956-2023)



It was back in the early 1980s when the West Midlands Police Male Voice Choir was on the look out for a new Musical Director. They'd got wind of a young man who was in town to learn how to be a music teacher. What soon followed was three very happy years with Max Brockman-More at the helm, during which he learnt the skills to control and direct a male voice choir, which would come in very handy in due course. Having concluded his studies, Max moved down to the South West to start work at St John's School in Marlborough, near Swindon. The choir presented him with a briefcase, complete with his initials and, when he got married, made the journey down to Exeter to sing during the ceremony.

A few years later, Swindon Male Voice Choir was searching for their next Director of Music. Having heard of a young man from Marlborough, the chairman and secretary went to meet with Max and, at the next committee meeting, declared that 'he'd be a good un' – such was the extent of Max's recruitment process (how things have changed). He served the choir for 10 years before handing the baton on to his successor. It was only 18 months later when said successor went off to form his own choir and Max was called on to hold the fort on a 'temporary' basis. Well, it wasn't very temporary as Max finally retired from the choir in April 2022 having conducted us for over 30 years.

I first encountered or perhaps experienced Max when I was a schoolboy and my father was secretary of the West Mid-

lands Police MVC. I heard all sorts of stories about Max and would look forward to the annual concert in Birmingham Town Hall, typically with the choir sharing the stage with a military band. When I moved down to Swindon just over 20 years ago, it was my dad who told me that Max conducted the Swindon MCV, that they rehearse on Mondays and then asked what was I doing that Monday. Of course, I did go to the next rehearsal which was the start of a wonderful 20-year association with Max.

As well as music, Max did have other loves in life – photography, cycling and teaching. It was his cycling that perhaps got him into the most trouble – I recall a story from his time in Brum when he had a run-in with a lorry and lost; and then in much more recent times came off his bike and spent Christmas morning in the local hospital. He did have a real gift for finding the right words at the right time, whether this was during a concert when introducing a song, when being interviewed for radio or simply when in conversation with others. His obvious connection with youngsters, obviously honed over many years spent in the classroom, was a delight to witness. His humour was never far away and, as his confidence grew, his compering tended to grow longer and longer, often to the annoyance of the choir groupies. He rarely told jokes but was always funny. Monday evening rehearsals were something to look forward to, a time to be with friends, to enjoy singing together and to have a laugh, usually with Max at the centre of it all.



His considerable musicality, of course, was paramount. He was a 'carrot' man – always encouraging, never singling out choristers who were struggling to hold their line and, in those 20 years, I can only recall him raising his voice two or three times. He was patient and inspiring, and brought out the best in everyone. Oh, and he made us laugh, in case I'd not mentioned that al-

ready! He was also very capable of holding his own, especially when sharing the stage with some very impressive guests. Perhaps Max's greatest legacy is the many songs that he arranged or composed for us. As well as a number of TTB standards like *The Lily of the Valley*, Christmas features large in the list and our annual Christmas concert would not be complete without a rendition of *Somewhere in the Night*. We will hold him in our hearts as we continue to perform them.

To mark his retirement, the choir unanimously voted to make him an Honorary Life Member. The last time I saw Max was when I presented him with his certificate. He knew that his time was short but was clearly moved with the recognition. I then asked the wider SMVC family to send me memories of Max before producing a book of memories for him as well as to show his family just how much the choir loved him. I handed this to his wife, Mary, at the hospice in Swindon where Max spent his last few days. Mary was delighted to report that Max had been overwhelmed with the book 'but in a good way'.

It was my very sad duty to pass on the news of Max's death. He knew that his time was limited and was able to plan his own funeral. It proved to be a poignant day with us first singing in the morning at the private committal at the Crematorium in Swindon. The afternoon saw Max's local church packed with friends and family, there to pay their own tributes to a remarkable man. We were joined by the Marlborough Youth Choir, which Max had started when he took early retirement from St John's, for an emotional rendition of *O Love*, a song that he had introduced to both choirs. However, it was perhaps the singing of *Gwahoddiad*, that quintessential male voice piece that Max had chosen especially, that moved everyone the most – never had those words, sung so often, meant so much to us.

Like so many others over those 30+ years, I consider it to have been a privilege to have sung under his direction, to have enjoyed his humour and to have called him my friend.

Music Review Autumn 2023

Music Review Officer - Liz Moulder



Summer is nearly over and it has been interesting to follow so many NAC choirs on various media platforms, performing again and highlighting such a variety of genres and musical styles with enthusiasm and musical prowess. With this in mind, I would like to draw MDs' attention to two publications released in the past year which could further your own and therefore your choirs' development and expertise.

'The Listening Conductor' by Edward-Rhys Harry was published in 2022 by Llyfrau Cambria Books, priced £15. It was written during 2021 as we were slowly returning to rehearsals after the pandemic. As its title suggests the focus is on why MDs should be continuing to develop their listening skills. The book covers a wide range of topics from the obvious first chapter, 'Why should we listen?' through various others relating to a wide range of technical issues that as conductors, we should all be addressing. Chapters on Active Listening, Blending, Vocal Health, Listening to Feedback are just a few topics covered in this comprehensive book. The chapter on Listening in the Post-Pandemic World is still very relevant today! All areas are supported with practical advice and exercises with clear explanations. This

book should be a must for all conductors whether or not you are new to the role or, like me, an MD of fifty years, needing to freshen up her own skills as a conductor and vocal trainer.

My second recommendation is a practical handbook of warmups. 'How To Make Your Choir Sound Awesome' by Lucie Hollins and Suzzie Vango was also published in 2022 by Banks Music Publications. They are 'evangelical about the power of proper warm-ups' so this book covers Movement and Alignment, Breathing and Airflow and Vocalising. A general introduction on how to use the book is followed by a series of exercises, divided into sections which can be mixed and matched to suite the needs of your choir. All exercises have concise directions with a 'Why We Do This' explanation on the back. There are lots of fun exercises followed by lengthier pieces at the end which I am using with my choir to further develop their a cappella singing. Your warmup sessions will definitely be more fun and there is no reason why some of them cannot be used in your 'cool down' at the end of the rehearsal. At £39.50 it is a serious investment but well worth it.

Turning to choral arrangements, 'The Oxford Book of Flexible Choral Songs' edited by Alan Bullard and published by OUP is well worth consideration. This is a collection of over fifty secular songs, perfect for

any choral group due to the flexible arrangements of a repertoire ranging from madrigals to new compositions by a variety of composers. The preface clearly indicates how the vocal scoring works for SATB, female and male voice choirs. The three-part arrangement of Scarborough Fair by Michael Higgins and *The Gartan Mother's Lullaby* arranged by Alan Bullard are two of the traditional songs given new life by their arrangers whilst *Eletelephony* by Ben Parry definitely had me smiling. The composer's suggestion that it should be performed with a feeling of the 'zany and ludicrous' should be adhered to! There are many more arrangements worthy of mention but not enough space to cover in this review. So have a browse through this book yourself and if your choir still has a slight imbalance of parts post covid, this could well be a good investment. It costs £19.25 but savings are offered on bulk buys.

And finally, you will all have received your copy of the Centenary Songbook which I hope you have looked at. There is something for everyone from the SSA swing style arrangement of *Soon I Will Be Done* arranged by Douglas Coombes. (love the piano accompaniment), the more challenging *Notes from the Choir*, SATB, with its changing rhythms, keys and tempos to the unaccompanied five-part *Raise the Roof*, simple but effective.

25th Anniversary

Voices In Harmony - Midlands South West - Robert Snaith

The dawn of 2023 brought to an end a significant milestone in the life of Voices in Harmony, the West Midlands, Black Country based SATB choir. Originally formed for a one off performance of Handel's Messiah, 2022 was the choir's 25th anniversary year. As well as Musical Director Stephen Bradley and Pianist Hilary Bradley, there were six choir members still

singing with VIH.

The preceding years, with Covid dominating, and activities severely restricted, meant that there was a cautious start to the year, with, naturally, some choir members somewhat reluctant to mix at close quarters with sixty others in the rehearsal room. However, progress was made, and 'normal service' gradually re-

sumed, enabling the choir to take on bookings for concerts.

In May, VIH visited Ruiton Congregational Church, in Gornal (in the heart of the Black Country) where the audience enthusiastically enjoyed the concert.

This was followed a week later, by a celebratory dinner for the choir members

and partners.

June saw a trip to Redditch, Worcestershire, for another well received concert in St Stephen's Church.

In July VIH paid a visit to St Matthew & St Chad, in Smethwick, the home church of one of the longest, and indeed most loyal, serving bass singers.

On October 15, the choir held its 25th Anniversary Concert at the Cornbow Hall in Halesowen, along with its guests, Travelling Brass (an ensemble of top-class brass players from around the country) and soprano Hilary Crowhurst. This proved to be a memorable night with a capacity crowd, the proceeds being for Cancer Research UK.

In November, the choir hosted the annual Remembrance Festival at Holy Trinity Church in Old Hill, with The Staffordshire Band taking centre stage for both the concert and the Remembrance Service. The

band has enjoyed significant success over the years, including several appearances at the Royal Albert Hall in the National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain. The British Legion flags, as well as the presence of the local MP and other dignitaries, made the evening very special.

To round off the year, in addition to local events, including a garden centre visit on Christmas Eve, Voices in Harmony held their annual Christmas Concert on December 10, at Holy Trinity Church, with Travelling Brass and Hilary Crowhurst once again adding to the festive occasion with appropriate, excellently performed music.

MD Stephen Bradley says, 'My highlights were the last three months of the year, the 25th anniversary concert in the Cornbow Hall to a packed responsive audience, the Remembrance concert with the Staffordshire band again to a full church and then the free Christmas concert again to

a large responsive audience.'

Chair Karen Chaplin found it hard to mention only one or two highlights because there have been so many, but says, 'Top of my list I guess is spending a night in A&E after our celebration meal - and I hadn't been drinking, honestly! Seeing so many people coming to our concerts; I wasn't sure if there would be a public appetite for concerts after all the social distancing but there certainly does seem to be. And recovering our stamina for singing, so encouraging.'

In early 2023, the choir moved rehearsal premises, giving more favourable acoustics. Encouragingly, both 2023 and 2024 are now fully booked.

www.vihchoir.org

Walking In Beauty

Eastwood Collieries' Male Voice Choir - Midlands East – Rob Edwards

The choir was very pleased to welcome Douglas Coombes and his wife Carole to St Mary's Church, Eastwood in July. The members of the choir were joined by a number of musical directors from other local choirs for a conducting master class based around *I Walk In Beauty* – a traditional Navajo prayer arranged by Douglas.

It is always interesting to experience another take on the warm up routine. The importance of posture, standing, sitting and holding music correctly. No slouching in seats or hiding your eyes behind your copies. Douglas stressed the importance of being prepared both physically and mentally for beginning of a song - even a phrase within a song. Breathing in time and internalising the opening sound and note.

Douglas was also keen to move singers about between sections. It's much easier to sing surrounded by your own part but singing amongst other parts is very beneficial. You get to appreciate more of the harmonies, learn to become more self-reliant and it can help the musical director get a more balanced sound from the choir.



Something that is well worth trying even if it feels a little uncomfortable to begin with – you never know – you might make a new friend in the choir. That led neatly in to listening skills – listening to those around you, the other parts in the choir, the accompaniment – all these help your memory and to maintain pitch.

Douglas emphasised the importance of singing on the vowel sounds. The vowel sounds produce the sounds, those sounds are punctuated by the consonants to make words. Hold on to the vowel sounds even to the point of putting the last consonant onto the start of the next word.

As well as a focus on *I Walk in Beauty*, Douglas took the choir through its paces with a number of other pieces from the choir's current repertoire, ably accompanied by our musical director Liz Moulder.

It was good to see that Douglas favoured warming down the choir at the end of the evening as well as warming up at the start. So many choirs miss out on this important aspect. Singers are like athletes, the vocal cords, like muscles should be warmed up before the hard work starts and cooled down at the end.

All in all, a thoroughly enjoyable evening that engaged the singers and musical directors from beginning to end, we all learned something that will hopefully make our walk all the more beautiful in the future.



Conference Coordinator update.

Hello to you all this lovely sunny morning in July following the very wet days we have experienced earlier this month. From reports I have received it seems the location of our 2023 conference at the Holiday Inn Taunton was successful and Edward-Rhys Harry as our speaker was well received. I do appreciate any comments about the conference you make as this helps me to locate destinations for the future.



Several comments made at the open forum at Kendal two years ago for example, have culminated in the 2024 conference being held on the Fred.Olsen cruise ship Bolette. Bookings for the conference cruise have been arriving on my desk over the last month with a veritable

flood this week.

We will shortly be passing one hundred bookings. We have an allocated number of cabins, so if you are considering joining us next year please send your booking form to me as soon as possible. The ship has a capacity of 1350 but there are several other groups booking cabins.

Please send your booking form only to me (no payment).

I will forward to Fred.Olsen after taking the details I need. They will contact you shortly afterwards for payment of the deposit. The deposit is £70 per person.

I have visited a hotel on the outskirts of Cambridge, the Holiday Inn Lakeview, Bridge Road, Impington, Cambridge, CB24 9PH with a view to it being the base for our 2025 conference. My initial idea was to have the conference nearer the London area near the M25 but there are problems with the idea since costs skyrocket for accommodation as you approach London and most of the affordable hotels either have limited parking, on-street parking, or levy a large charge. I have arranged with the Holiday Inn hotel to hold our Members' Open Forum there on Saturday 30 September commencing at 11.00.

The forum is open to any chorister throughout the UK from a member choir. I would particularly encourage members of choirs local to the Cambridge area to try to send a representative. We invite choirs to perform a Conference Concert on the Saturday Evening of the conference for the entertainment of the delegates and afford an opportunity for choirs to perform in concert together.

Lunch is provided during the meeting, which usually lasts about two hours. Please let our General Secretary know of your intention to attend, for catering purposes.



Kindest regards to you all.

Clive Lawton Conference Co-ordinator

Dates for your diary

Members Open Forum Saturday 30 September Holiday Inn Impington Cambridge

2024 conference Cruise 17-19 April, Wednesday to Friday, Cruise ship Bolette Southampton

2025 Conference 4-6 April Friday-Sunday

Look forward to meeting you at the Open Forum this year and on the high seas in 2024



National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

National Conference Booking Form 1. Fred.Olsen Cruise Ship Bolette Southampton to Liverpool

CONFERENCE COSTS

Full Conference Stay

The price quoted is

per person for the whole conference cruise

There are no single room supplements

Price per person for whole conference includes admission to all lectures
two nights bed breakfast, lunch, evening meal, refreshments, and all the facilities of the ship
per person £250

Return coach from Liverpool to Southampton £25

Car Parking at Southampton £25

Cancellation charges as per Fred.Olsen tariff available on website

CABIN TYPE

All cabins have either an ocean view window or porthole
For the cruise all Single accommodation will be in a twin cabin.

PAYMENT AND BOOKING

Payment and booking for the cruise are being handled by Fred.Olsen

THE PERSONAL DETAILS OF EACH DELEGATE MUST BE ENTERED ON FORM 2

Clive Lawton - Conference Coordinator, 20 Arthur's Court, Stretton, Burton upon Trent Staffordshire DE13 0GS
01283 569677 or 07939012458 cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com



National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

National Conference Booking Form 2 17-19 April 2024

The event is open to all who wish to attend on payment of the appropriate charges

Guest 1

Title
Mr/Mrs/Miss.....

First Name as shown on
passport.....

Surname as shown on
passport.....

Nationality.....

Date of
Birth.....

Place of
Birth.....

Address.....
.....PostCode.....

Telephone
Home.....Mobile.....

Email
Address.....

Special Requirements

Diet
[type].....

Disability [wheelchair user]
please bring your own
chair.....

NAC
group.....

Choir
Name.....

Cabin type. Single or
twin?.....

PLEASE PHOTOCOPY THIS FORM FOR MORE GUESTS IF REQUIRED

Please return your completed forms and deposits to

Clive Lawton - Conference Coordinator, 20 Arthur's Court, Stretton, Burton upon Trent Staffordshire DE13 0GS

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cliveandpatlawton@btinternet.com



National Association of Choirs

Joining the Nation in Choral Singing

National Conference timetable 17 - 19 April 2024 MS Bolette, Southampton

Wednesday 17 April 2024

12.00 pm	Delegates board ship, register at reception, and collect delegate pack
3.00 pm	National officers meeting
4.30 pm	Annual General Meeting
6.15 pm	Drinks and canapes Main dining room
7.00 pm	Gala Dinner is served, five courses with wine Main dining room
9.00 pm	Ship entertainment Neptune Theatre

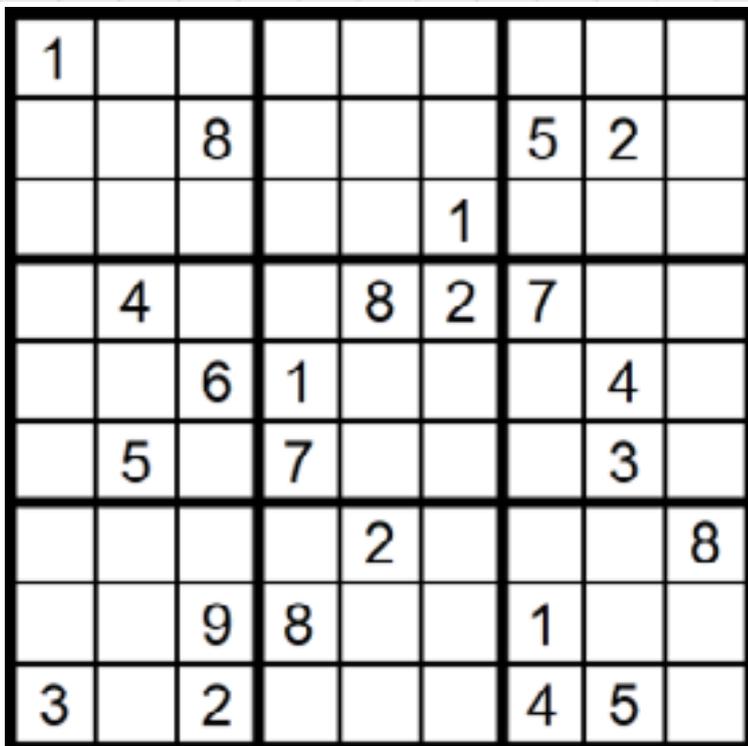
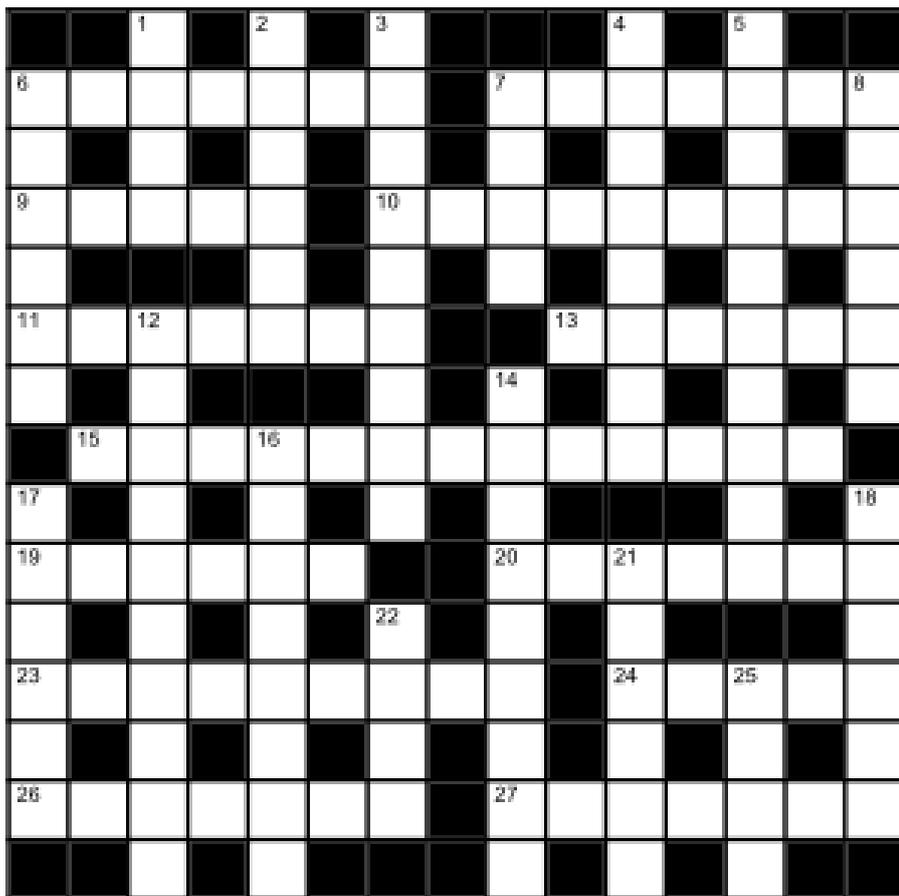
Thursday 18 April 2024

7.00 am	Access to trade stands to set up
7.30 - 9.30 am	Breakfast Buffet bar or,
8.00 - 9.30 am	A la carte Main Restaurant
9.30 - 10.30 am	First Seminar Dr Douglas Coombes
10.30 - 11.00 am	Coffee and trade stand viewing
11.00 - 12.00 pm	Second Seminar Tim Knight
12.00 - 2.00 pm	Lunch
2.00 - 3.00 pm	Trade stands presentations
3.00 - 4.00 pm	Members Open Forum
4.00 - 4.30 pm	Coffee and trade stand viewing
4.30 - 5.30 pm	Choirs Presentation Auditorium
6.30 - 7.00 pm	Pre-dinner reception by Fred Olsen (nibbles and drinks)
7.00 - 9.00 pm	5 Course A 'La Carte Dinner Main Restaurant
9.00 - 9.45 pm	Fred.Olsen Cabaret Production Show
10.00 - 11.00 pm	Kentwood Show Choir
11.00 pm Onwards	Full programme of entertainment around the ship

Friday 19 April 2024

7.00 - 8.00 am	Breakfast buffet
8.30 am	Disembark ship
	Coaches for Southampton depart when all passengers on board

PUZZLE PAGE



Across

- 6 Operating physician (7)
- 7 Waggish (7)
- 9 Promo statement (5)
- 10 Quarry pet rebuilt floor covering (9)
- 11 Air current rising (7)
- 13 Advanced devices (2-4)
- 15 To treat emotional problems (13)
- 19 Containing warm lettuce (6)
- 20 Powerful horse plugged in? (7)
- 23 A price that falls over (5,4)
- 24 Say again (5)
- 26 German penny (7)
- 27 Desert basin (7)

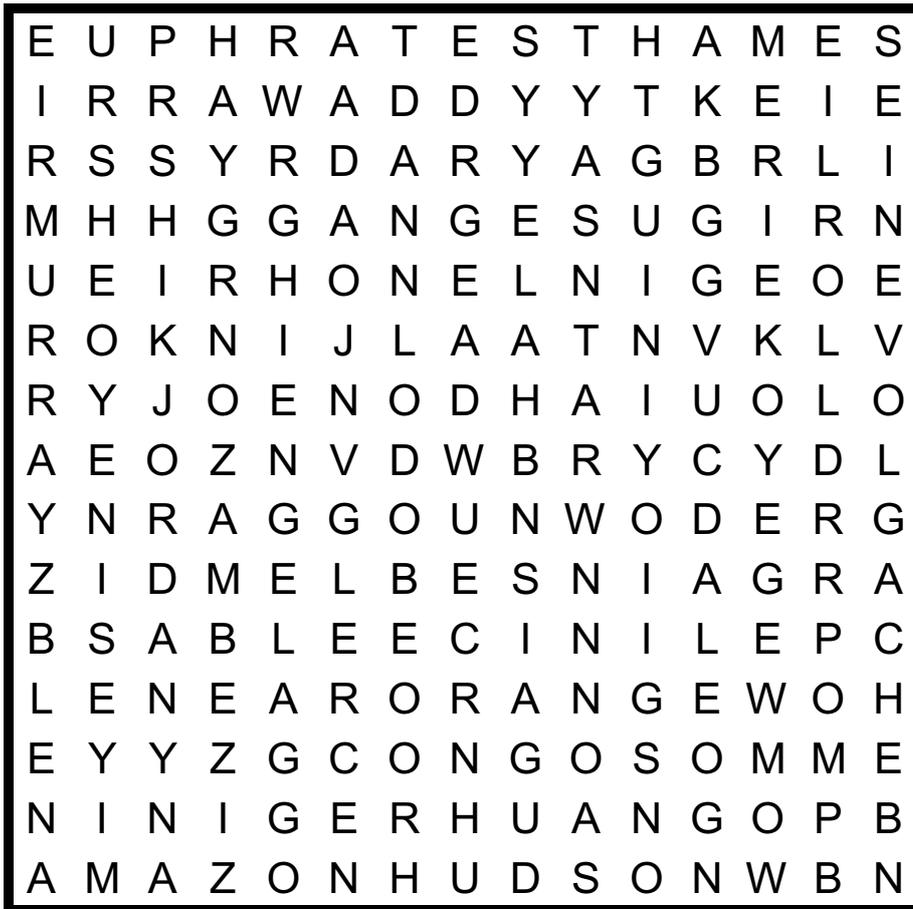
Down

- 1 Indo-Aryan language (4)
- 2 Rabies is confused in the Balkan Peninsula (6)
- 3 Regardless (2,5,2)
- 4 Who lives here (8)
- 5 Gospel tech confusion helps to hang the washing (7,3)
- 6 Undersea craft arriving? (6)
- 7 Stupid person makes sudden movement (4)
- 8 I got it in my life (6)
- 12 Calamitous bowl demise can eviscerate, (10)
- 14 Surname of William, 14th century MP (9)
- 16 Baffled chickens enter airports and hotels (5-3)
- 17 Amount added (6)
- 18 Terrible parent cuts a hole (6)
- 21 Flippant manner (6)
- 22 Not short (4)
- 25 Then paste (4)

SOLUTIONS PAGES 26/27

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| Indus | Syr Darya |
| Irrawaddy | Thames |
| Jordan | Tigris |
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50 Years With The Baton

Harrow Apollo Male Choir - Thames North - David Heasman

The fact of the matter is that I never wanted to be the Music Director of the Apollo Singers as the choir was known 50 years ago but somehow it just happened.

I joined the choir as a chorister in 1963 having read a letter to the editor of the local newspaper from the then secretary of the choir saying it was looking for new members. At the time I was doing my professional studies. I had always enjoyed singing and this seemed an opportunity to get some relief from textbooks and lectures. So, I went along to the West Hendon ex-servicemen's club and met the MD at the time, a silver haired Welshman called Emlyn Griffiths.

Some years later Emlyn became extremely ill and one day in 1972 he was unable to conduct a concert. I found myself deputising for him at a moment's notice. I did not volunteer, and that concert remains a blur, but I guess it must have been a reasonable success.

However, the choir immediately set about recruiting a permanent MD and in a brief time appointed Gerald Anthony, another Welshman clearly known to the London Welsh community. I do not recall much about him save that he was one of three musical brothers. His brother, Trevor, was a fine bass baritone and a professional



singer in West End shows and his other brother, Cyril, was the organist at the Welsh chapel near Kings Cross. It was there the choir took part in a concert given by the well-known popular singer Dorothy Squires. We subsequently sang in concerts with other famous Welsh singers including tenor Edgar Evans and Ivor Emmanuel, a star of the epic film 'Zulu' where he sang *Men of Harlech*. Gerald Anthony led the choir for about a year until he decided suddenly to leave London and return to

Wales. At that point in 1973 I found the baton back in my hands, although truth to say it was 'thrust' into them.

During the following 50 years the choir has become a major part of my life and that of my family. Roz has been the Hon Secretary for 42 years and my late father was chairman in 1980/1. It was he who recognised the choir needed a set of rules and designed the original constitution.

Should you ask me what has given me the greatest pleasure during my time with the choir I would have to say that it has been getting to know a wide variety of interesting people from diverse backgrounds and different social levels all with a common love of music and singing. I recall that at one time we had two choristers sitting next to each other. One was the Chief Executive Officer of Philips Domestic Appliances UK and the other whose job was to light the boilers before the first shift at the factory of Smith Industries in Cricklewood, a major local employer at the time and supplier of many fine choristers.

I have certainly had much pleasure in directing the choir at many interesting venues both on tour and nearer home. They range from Chester Cathedral to Wormwood Scrubs Prison. Along the way there has been a fair amount of stress – but no regrets.

End The Season On A High!

The Appledore Singers - Devon - Viv Zussman

Appledore Singers' 'Super Summer Concert' on 2 July proved to be a real success, with a packed audience singing along (either silently, mouthing the words, or in the case of former members, singing lustily!) and enjoying the song choices that our Musical Director had made for the occasion. We could feel the rapport between choir and audience – many of whom come year after year to this event. Speaking to choir members afterwards, many said that they'd been 'buoyed up' by the atmosphere, which is a real treat!

Due to the retirement of our previous compere, Anthony Chambers, we had a new compere, Tony Nicholls, for whom this was a gentle introduction, rather than



a baptism of fire.

After our summer concert last year, I sent in an article to this magazine, accompanied by a photo of the Pips, our smaller singing group, performing songs from 'South Pacific' in grass skirts and scallop shells strategically placed. This year it was decided to perform a medley from 'My Fair Lady' and, of course, we dressed appropriately in tailcoats, top hats and canes for the 'men' and lovely, long white dresses, big floppy hats and parasols for the 'women', embellished with beautiful,



big paper flowers: all sorted out or made by choir members. As per last year, there was a scramble to get dressed behind the curtains during the interval, but we were all dressed and ready by the time the curtain went up. Incidentally, how on earth

do men cope with a dress shirt with high collar and double cuffs? The audience and choir had the lyrics to the medley, so were able to sing along with us. However, we also had choreography to remember, which was fun. It all came off very well,

according to the audience, who gave us an ovation – even as we came down from the stage to take our places amidst the main choir for the rest of the concert.

Proceedings finished with an arrangement of Abba's *Thank you for the Music*, which we sang with all our hearts and raised the roof. I wonder what medley we'll be singing next year?

Watch this space!

An AGM And A Fond Farewell...

The Glasgow Phoenix Choir - Scotland West - Anne Kay

Conductor and Director of Music
Cameron Murdoch

Welcome to the latest escapades of Glasgow Phoenix Choir. This year we had a slightly quieter end to the season than is often the case. However, we did take part in some great concerts.

In May, we revisited the magnificent Paisley Abbey; founded in 1163, the church still serves as a Parish Church of the Church of Scotland. It is an amazing place to sing and well worth a visit if you are in the area. The choir was delighted to be singing in aid of ACCORD Hospice, which provides palliative and end of life care for the people of Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire. We had a great turnout in support of the hospice and the audience showed warm appreciation of our efforts.

Our next May venture took us to a new venue for many of the choir, Wellington Church. Many choristers looked forward to a visit to the antipodes until it was pointed out we were not going to New Zealand but to the West End of Glasgow. However, we all put the disappointment behind us and worked hard to prepare. The concert raised funds for Christian Aid and a small but very appreciative audience gave their generous support to the

cause. By the way, if anyone would like us to go to New Zealand – to sing, that is – please get in touch.



Our final concert of the season took place in a favourite destination – Moncreiff Parish Church, East Kilbride. While we are regular visitors, in recent years our concerts have mainly taken place at Christmas when we have always been grateful for the warmth of the church. Sadly, warmth, like a dog, is not just for Christmas. It was, as we say in the West of Scotland, 'a roaster'. Several people fainted and had

to be treated for heat stroke. Just kidding... this is Scotland, it's never that hot. But, yes, it was VERY warm. Nonetheless, it was a brilliant end to the season and, yes, we will return in December. Get the Clottie Dumpling on!

As is unfortunately often the case, we had to say a final farewell to one of our sopranos, Annie MacDonald. Annie had been in the choir for 13 years and her lovely smile was seldom far away. Even in the last few years when life had not been so kind to her, Annie did her best to stay upbeat. Her death was very sudden and came as a great shock to all of us as she was such a joyful and vivacious woman. She will be very greatly missed.

And so to the AGM, the three letters we all dread most in the year even more than those received from the Inland Revenue. The burning questions: Will everyone turn up? Will there be a fight? Will several people threaten to leave in disgust? Will Maggie McFlat-as-a-pancake offer to sing? Happily the answers were: more or less; no; no; and - thank heavens - no!

At this year's event, our president of the last six years, Angus Leitch, resigned office. Unfortunately, Angus has had some recent health problems and decided that

the time was right to step down. We will always be grateful to Angus who led us through the pandemic and helped keep the choir together during that terrible time. He will continue to sing in the bass section, and we hope he will be with us for many more years of singing. His replacement as president is Janette Walker. Janette has been choir president before and we decided to give her a second go at it to see if she can get it right this time. (If you're reading this, Janette, I'm only kidding... honestly – don't sack me, I like being publicity officer.)

It was a great pleasure for choir council to receive a nomination for Honorary Vice Presidency of the choir. This is awarded to choir members, nominated by other choristers, who have given outstanding service to the choir. Elizabeth Dingwall has been with the choir for more years than you would guess from her appearance. During that time she has sung both as a choir member and superb soloist and has held a variety of offices within the choir council. She can also whistle very loudly to quieten us all, when needed. This well-deserved nomination was approved by general acclaim. Congratulations, Elizabeth.

One of the interesting questions raised at the AGM referred to when we give out long-service awards. We start at 25 years. The member asking has just completed ten years and while he received congratulations on that, was asked to stick with it for another 15 if he wants an actual award. This made me think about the service achieved by choir members. Currently, we have 88 members some of whom joined in the 2022-23 season. Our longest serving gentleman, Bill Forrest has been with us for 65 years and longest serving lady, Maureen Moore has been a choir member for 68 years. The total number of years served by all singing members put together is a staggering 1,684½ years. On top of that, we have a range of other types of members, associates and patrons whose service and support goes on in the background. Surely that's an achievement worthy of celebration.

Our new season commences on Monday 28 August and will see us straight into preparation for a tour of the Scottish Highlands at the end of September, which I'll tell you all about in the next exciting episode, unless Janette does sack me.

1 Conductor: Here the altos have the melody.

All the altos: What?

2 How many altos does it take to screw in a light bulb?

None. They can't get that high.

3 Part of our choir got kidnapped last week!

Two guys just got arrested for grand theft alto.

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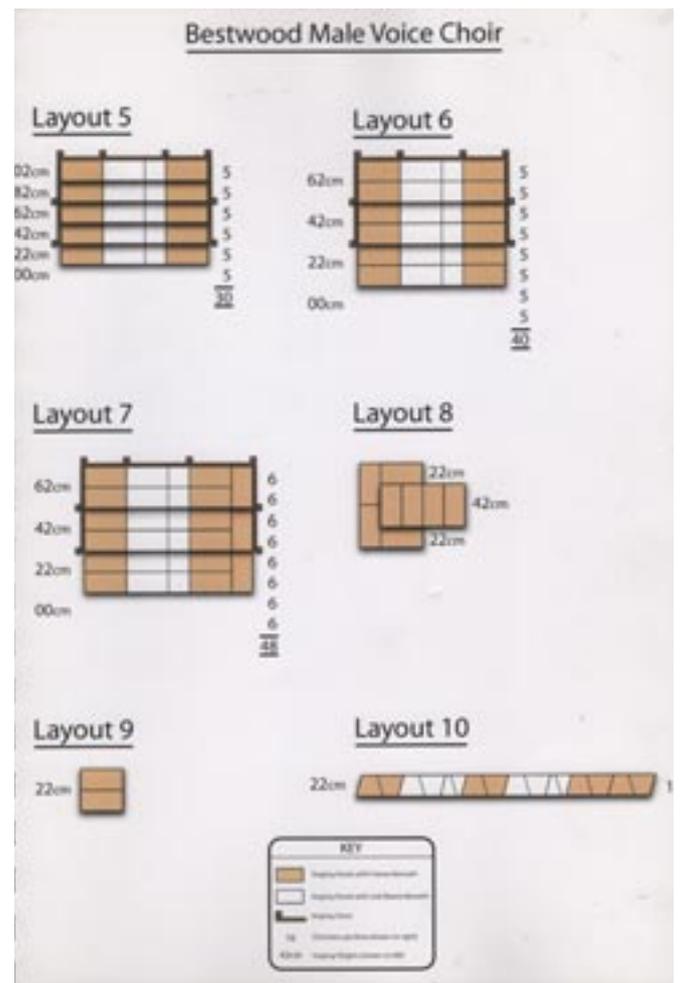
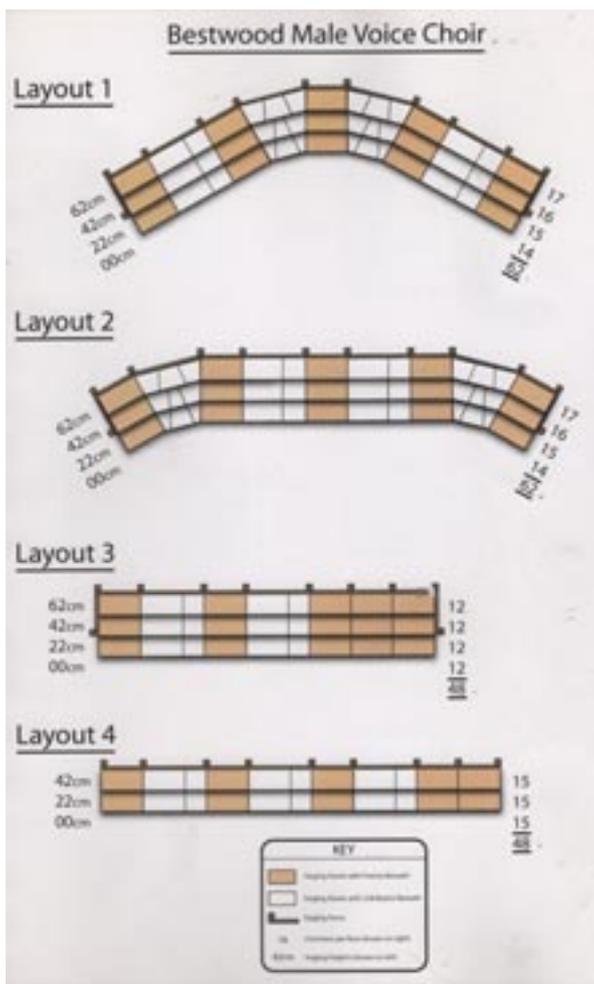
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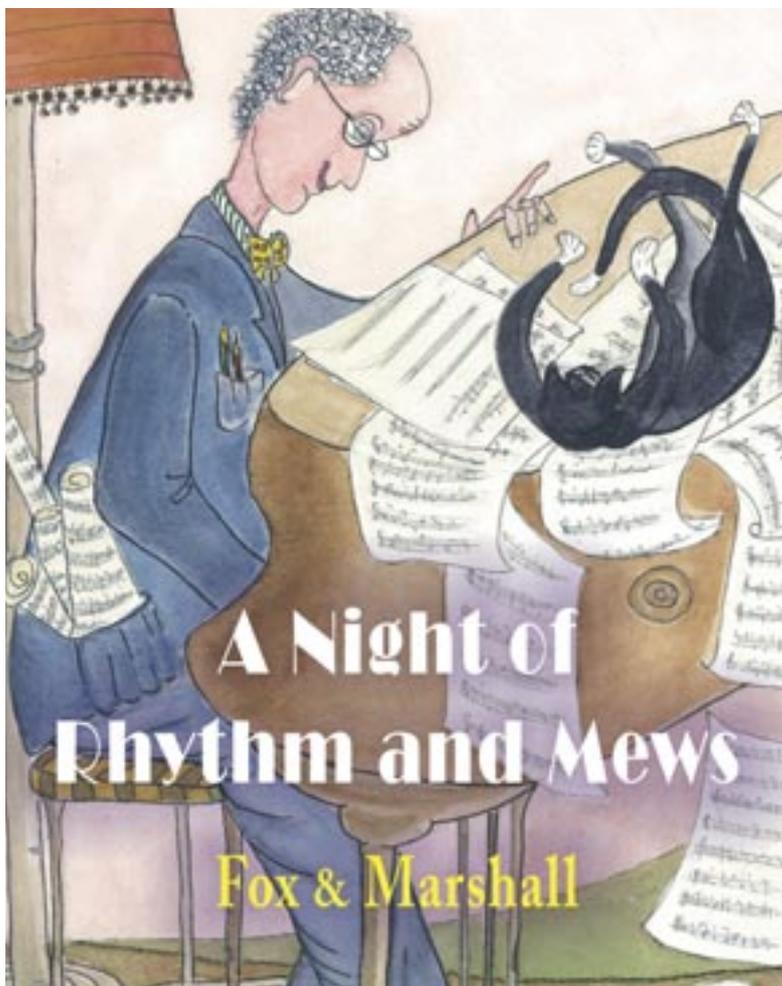
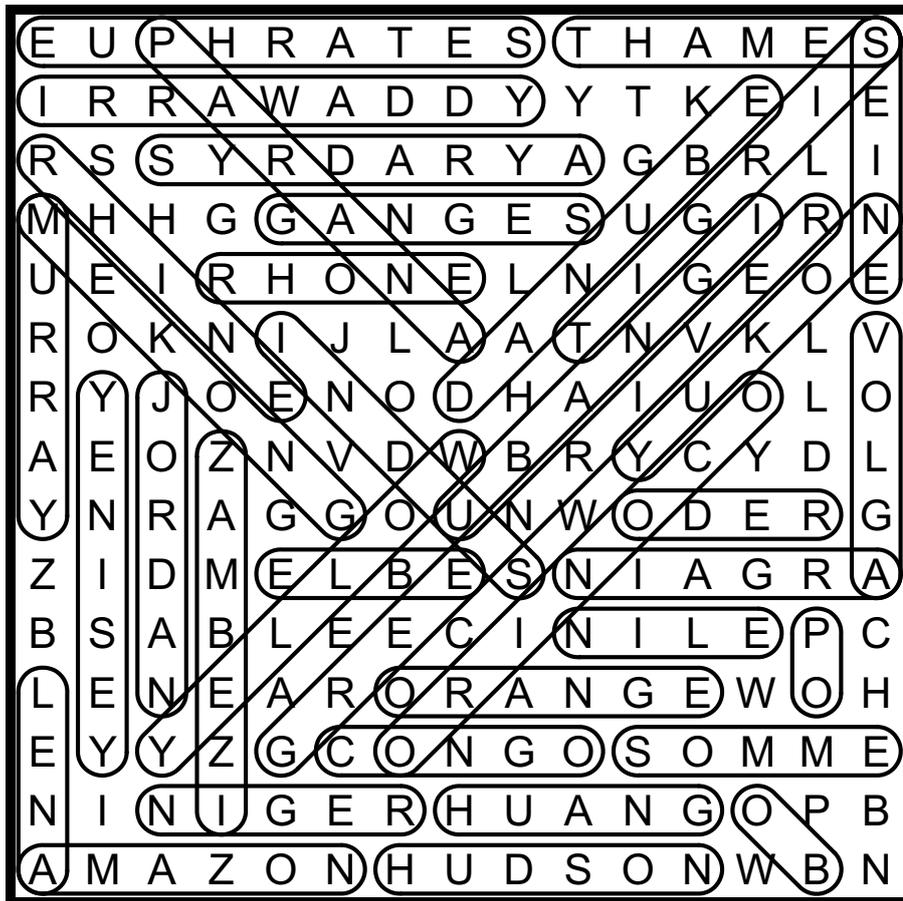
Bestwood Male Voice Choir - Midlands East - Peter Fletcher



We purchased this staging from Stage Innovations Ltd, Northallerton in July 2007 for £4,820. It is now surplus to requirements. We have the full manual, erection instructions and it is all packed into separate carrying bags and any reasonable offer would be considered.

Peter Fletcher - Publicity Officer
Bestwood MVC 07935 281537





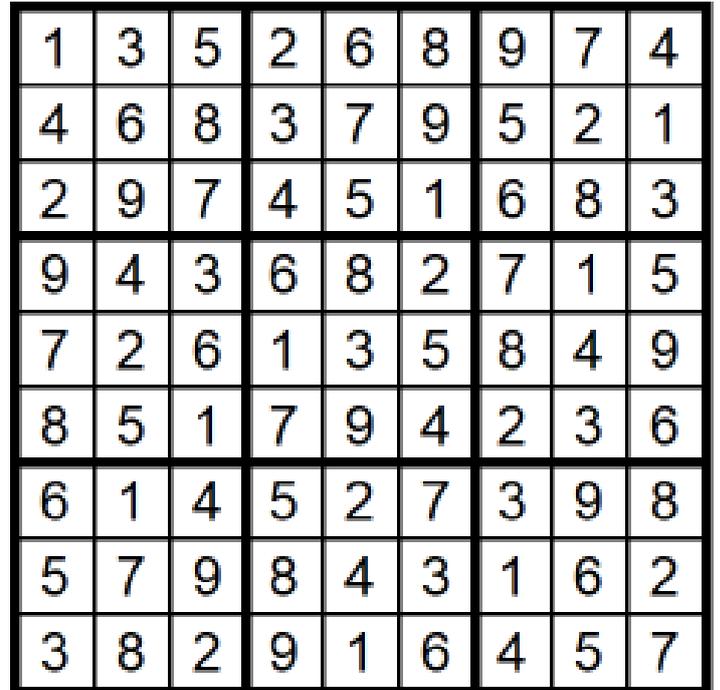
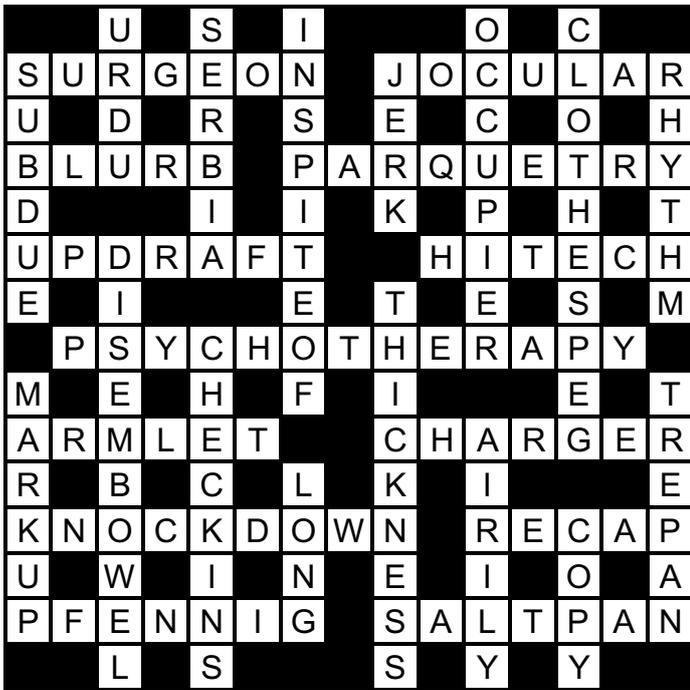
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(not in the body of) an email to

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‘Wow! that is a long email address’, I hear you say. Yes it is but you will find that once it’s in your computer you can just start to type it and your computer will offer to finish it for you.

Many of our contributors love to show their prowess by sending in wonderful finished articles with **coloured** headlines, five different fonts and many underlinings, *italics* and **bold** bits. Then, of course, I have to spend time taking them all out before I can set their article up the way you will see it in the magazine. I’m afraid I also have a thing about exclamation marks. I allow one per article. Anymore I remove.

KEEP IT SIMPLE!

PHOTOGRAPHS

Send me pictures as high resolution .jpegs of 1mb or more, minimum 300 dpi.

HOUSE STYLE

- We use Calibri 10pt in News & Views. (If you don’t have this, don’t worry I can soon change the one you use.)
- Set your paragraphs to single space with no spacing before or after paragraphs.
- Start with the name of your choir.
- Then the NAC group your choir is in.
- Tell me who has written it.
- Write your article.
- Quotes use single speech marks (same key as @ but without the shift).
- Dates do not include st nd rd or th
- Abbreviations do not have full stops.
- Song titles are shown in italics.
- Please do not put photos in the text.
- Don’t use am or pm in times.
- Unless the word ‘choir’ is part of a title it should NOT have a capital letter.
- Your choir is singular so ‘the choir is’ not ‘the choir are’

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9 January - Zoom

Members Open Forum

30 September - Impington
27 January - Zoom

Closing dates for submissions to News & Views

Spring Issue - 31 December

Summer Issue - 30 April

Autumn Issue - 31 August